

What is Claimed is:

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1. A data structure for communicating sophisticated information, said data structure being downloadable from a server to a receiving computer over a network, wherein the sophisticated information is generated by a software application and sent to the server as a source file by a sending computer over the network, said data structure comprising:

a translated data portion storing the sophisticated information contained in the source file as a translated data file; and

a data accessing portion included with said translated data portion, said data accessing portion including machine instructions for interrogation of said translated data file by the receiving computer so as to enable a user residing on the receiving computer to select user-defined intelligible formats of the sophisticated information without using a separate software application.

2. The data structure of claim 1, wherein said translated data file contains sophisticated information generated from any of a plurality of software applications, each having a unique source file format.

3. The data structure of claim 1, wherein said translated data portion and said data accessing portion are wrapped in a self extracting file format.

4. The data structure of claim 1, wherein the sophisticated information is a mathematical model that is used to generate user-intelligible data according to a mathematical relationship between the stored data and user-defined input.

5. The data structure of claim 4, wherein the sophisticated information is 3D model data rotatable in three-dimensional space.

6. The data structure of claim 1, wherein said translated data file contains
5 information generated from a computer aided design software application.

7. The data structure of claim 1, wherein said translated data portion contains unintelligible data.

8. The data structure of claim 7, wherein the unintelligible data includes vector-based numerical data which is used to generate screen images of physical data according to user-defined input.

9. The data structure of claim 1, wherein said translated data is unintelligible data and wherein the machine instructions provided in said data accessing portion are capable of generating user defined, intelligible formats of the sophisticated information on the receiving computer having resident in its random access memory machine instructions originating from software code consisting essentially of operating system software code.

20 10. The data structure of claim 1, further including a means for protecting the sophisticated information including storing said translated data into a user-identifying file format whereby user authorization is required at the receiving computer before allowing the user to select said user-defined intelligible formats of the sophisticated information.

11. The data structure of claim 10, wherein said user-identifying file format includes a plurality of user-authorizing passwords granting varying levels of access to the sophisticated information contained in said data structure.

5 12. A method for providing information to a recipient over a computer network, the information being generated and stored in a source file by a sender residing on a sending computer wherein a software application is needed to interrogate the information stored in the source file, the sending computer being connected to a server over the network and the recipient computer being connected to the server for access to data stored on the server, said method comprising the steps of:

(i) communicating a request for the delivery of the information to the recipient including the step of sending the source file from the sending computer to the server over the network;

10 (ii) processing the source file at the server for access to the information by the recipient, including the steps of: translating the source file into a translated file, and providing with the translated file a means for accessing the translated file in a user intelligible format so as to permit the recipient to interrogate the information without the use of a separate software application; and

15 (iii) providing the translated data and means for accessing the information in a user intelligible format for access by the recipient.

20 13. The method of claim 12, wherein said communicating a request for delivery step further includes sending a network address of the intended recipient to the server and sending a message to the server for delivery to the recipient.

14. The method of claim 12, wherein said communicating a request for delivery step further includes specifying a security protocol defining recipient access rights to the data stored in the source file and wherein said processing the source file step further includes the step of protecting the translated file by wrapping the translated file into a file format requiring recipient
5 identification before granting the recipient access to at least a portion of the translated file.

15. The method of claim 12, wherein said providing the translated data and means for accessing the information step further includes prompting the recipient for a password for access to the translated file.

16. The method of claim 12, wherein said providing the translated data and means for accessing the information step includes establishing a communication link with the recipient computer for download of the translated data from the server to the recipient computer over the Internet.

17. The method of claim 12, wherein the information for the recipient originates from a source file having data stored in one of a 3D model and a first graphics format and wherein the translating step includes translating a portion of the one of a 3D model and a first graphics format into at least a streamlined text format and a second graphics format.

18. The method of claim 12, wherein the source file includes sophisticated information.

19. The method of claim 12, wherein said translating the source file step further
25 includes storing the information contained in the source file into a non-modifiable file format.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the source file is a Computer Aided Design model and said storing the information contained in the source file into a non-modifiable file format step corresponds to storing the information in a file format compatible with a software application that does not allow modification to an input file.

21. In a computer network, a method for communicating to a supplier a request for response from a specifier, said method comprising the steps of:

(i) providing a network server including means for data storage, means for receiving data transmitted over the network from the specifier, means for processing specifier data and means for allowing the supplier to access the specifier data, the providing a network server step further including the step of providing with the means for receiving data a secure network communication link between the specifier and network server to limit unauthorized access to the specifier data;

(ii) receiving the request for response over the secure network communication link, the request for response including data stored in a source file on the specifier computer wherein the source file originates from any of a plurality of specifier preferred software applications;

(iii) processing the specifier data, including the steps of translating the specifier data into a translated file, and packaging the translated file including providing a means for accessing the translated file in a user intelligible format so as to permit the supplier to interrogate the information without the use of a separate software application;

(iv) notifying the supplier of the request for response; and

(v) if the request for response is accepted, providing the accepting supplier with access to the translated data.

22. The method of claim 21, said receiving the request for response step further including the step of receiving a specifier security protocol for limiting supplier access to the data stored in the source file and wherein said providing the accepting supplier with access to the translated data step further includes providing the supplier with access rights to the information
5 stored in the translated data according to the specifier security protocol.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein said providing the supplier with access rights step includes providing the supplier with a password access to the translated data.

24. The method of claim 21, wherein said translating step further includes the step of storing the specifier data into a non-modifiable file format so as to provide the accepting supplier with only that portion of the data contained in the source file that is needed for accessing the translated data in a user intelligible format.

25. The method of claim 21, wherein the source file includes sophisticated
15 information.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the sophisticated information is 3D model data.

20 27. The method of claim 21, wherein if the supplier accesses the translated data, further including the step of notifying the specifier that the supplier has accessed the translated data.

28. The method of claim 21, wherein said providing access to the accepting supplier step further includes providing a secure communication link between the supplier and network server for download of the translated file and means for accessing the translated file over the Internet.

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29. The method of claim 21, said providing a network server step further including the step of storing in the means for data storage a registry of suppliers for receiving requests for response from the specifier, and wherein said step of notifying the supplier of the request for response includes notifying the supplier based on the supplier information contained in the registry of suppliers.

30. A method for providing a solicitor with a network-based service for securely communicating a solicitation to a plurality of recipients, the solicitor and plurality of recipients being connected to a server over a network, the information being generated by a software application and stored in a source file on the solicitor computer wherein a software application is needed to communicate the information in the source file in a user intelligible format for the recipient residing at the recipient computer, said method comprising the steps of:

(i) receiving the source file at the server;

(ii) receiving recipient information at the server pertinent to the solicitation of the recipient including a text message for the recipient;

(iii) converting the source file, including the steps of packaging the source file information into a secure file, and wrapping the secure file with an executable file wherein the executable file permits the recipient to access the information generated by the solicitor's software application without using one of the solicitor's software application and a separate software application; and

(iv) providing the converted source file to the recipient.